Overall view of Muziano's fresco.

by pupils of Federico Zuccari. Stucco decorations and paintings by Livio Agresti embellished the chapel.

On the ceiling of the downstairs audience hall Federico Zuccari painted a Banquet of the Gods set in a mock perspective of columns and, in the corner medallions, allegories of the Four Seasons. The wall paintings were frescoed by Gerolamo Muziano and his pupils in April 1565. Their iconographic scheme has to do with geographic symbolism: from the wall with the fountain portraying the circular temple of Sibyl and its imitation waterfall (an attempt to represent the Tivoli of Antiquity) to the depictions of the Cardinal's holdings in Rome (the Quirinal Palace) and in Tivoli (the Villa d'Este and the Organ and Oval Fountains). Dominating the whole is the d'Este eagle protecting the golden apples of the Hesperides, from whence derives the Cardinal's motto: « ab insomni non custodita dracone. »

The other rooms are decorated with scenes of the battle of Tiburtus and Catillus against the Latins, the foundation of Tibur and the sacrifices related to this event, and the battle of Hercules Saxanus, on his way back with Geryon's cattle and the Hesperides' golden apples, against Albio and Belgio. Next is the room which has a ceiling fresco depicting the drowning of King Anius in the river Parensius which was henceforth known as the river Aniene, the chariots of Apollo and Venus drawn by dolphins, and, lastly, the rooms with the sacrifice of Noah after the Flood and the miracle of Moses causing water to spring from a rock (the latter being a clear reference to Cardinal Ippolito and his fountains). The scarcity of Christian themes has been remarked upon. It is almost as if the Cardinal wanted to show that he was above all a Renaissance prince who had hardly been touched by the new spirit of the Counter-Reformation even though the pagan subjects he chose clearly exalt Christian virtues.